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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 001286

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SUBJECT: SENATOR REED THANKS KUWAIT FOR CONTINUED SUPPORT;
DISCUSSES WOMEN'S VOTE, IRAQ, IRAN, PALESTINIANS, GHADAFI

Classified By: Ambassador Richard LeBaron for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1. (C) Summary: Senator Jack Reed (D-RI), accompanied by the Ambassador, OMC-K Chief and Poloff, met Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Shaykh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah March 27 at the Minister's home. The Senator expressed appreciation to Kuwait for assistance with U.S. military operations. The Minister reiterated the GOK's confidence that the National Assembly soon will grant women the right to vote. He also expressed confidence in probable Iraqi Prime Minister Ibrahim Al-Jaafari while lamenting Iran's decision to reject international nuclear monitoring. He noted the recent release of \$40 million to the Palestinian Authority. Meanwhile, the instability in Lebanon comes as no surprise to the Kuwaitis. Finally, the Minister clarified that Prime Minister Shaykh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's meeting with Libyan leader Muhamar Ghadafi centered on securing the release of Kuwaitis arrested on espionage charges. End summary.

Thank You Kuwait

2. (C) Senator Reed thanked the GOK and the Kuwaiti people for their support of U.S. forces to help the people of Iraq. The Minister responded that the U.S. is the "best of allies" and that the GOK appreciates U.S. troops and the war on terrorism. "I can't thank you enough for everything you've done," he said. Senator Reed added that the U.S. recognizes Kuwait's struggle with terrorism and its efforts to combat it.

Women's Voting Rights

3. (C) The Minister declared that the Government will succeed and the suffrage legislation will pass. He added that Kuwait is a functioning democracy, something not found in other places in the region. The only thing remaining to solidify Kuwait's democratic values is for Kuwaiti women to gain the right to vote.

Iraq

4. (C) Shaykh Jaber said that Iraq is a rich country, both culturally and resource-wise, and peace will help it return to its former position. He mentioned that the current struggle between Sunni and Shia is natural as each group vies for its own benefit. With time, the Minister felt, the various factions would begin to focus on the good of the nation and not just on their own constituencies. He warned that the threat of a return to dictatorial rule looms should one group continue to dominate and threaten the others. The Minister said he has a positive image Ibrahim Al-Jaafari with whom he had lunched. Shaykh Jaber viewed Jaafari as a good, smart man whom "we should get to know better."

Palestinians

5. (C) Shaykh Jaber said that both the Israelis and Palestinians need to do their part for peace, commenting that both sides currently are suffering heavy losses and paying a high price. The Senator mentioned that the change in Palestinian Authority (PA) leadership has allowed the U.S. to modify its policy and reinstate financial contributions to the PA. He encouraged the GOK to follow suit. The Minister reported the transfer of \$40 million in Kuwaiti aid, which was reported at the Algiers Arab League Summit.

Other Regional Concerns

6. (C) The Minister shared that he was surprised Iran, which Kuwait views as a friend and commercial market, had not responded to international nuclear monitoring efforts, resulting in Iran becoming a threat to the rest of the region. Shaykh Jaber said that he visited Iran prior to military action in Iraq and noticed how open-minded the young Iranians he met on the street were. The Minister said the GOK expected problems in Lebanon after the death of Rafiq Hariri since the government is unstable. "We expected riots on the

streets," he added.

Libya

17. (C) According to the Minister, the GOK has problems with Libyan leader Muhamar Ghadafi's extravagant spending despite his government's heavy debt burden. He said that the only reason why Prime Minister Shaykh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah met with Ghadafi at the Arab League Summit in Algiers was to secure the release of Kuwaiti hunters who, the Minister said, mistakenly entered Libya from Egypt and were arrested and charged as spies.

18. (U) Senator Reed departed before this message was prepared.

19. (U) Minimize considered.

LEBARON